

## Interview with Noel Marsh

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An interview with Noel Marsh

Interviewed by: Yin Marsh

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*Q: How many years did you serve with AID?*

MARSH: I served with AID and its predecessor agency for twenty-four years

*Q: When did you retire?*

MARSH: I retired in July of 1983.

Early years and education

*Q: Let's start off by hearing about where you are from, where you grew up and anything about your early family life that you might want to add.*

MARSH: Okay. I was born in San Francisco. Both my parents were originally from England. My mother and her brother and her widowed mother came to the United States when my mother was in her early teens, and they moved to California. My father, also born in England, moved to New Zealand with his family at the time when he was eight years old. When my dad was in his early 20s, he gave way to the travel urge, and he joined a ship as a crew member and went to Tahiti where he spent several months. Then, off to China where he spent some time, I'm not quite sure how long. He ended up in San

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Francisco where he settled down, met my mother, got married, and subsequently had me. I was an American by birth of course, but also I was registered at the British Consulate in San Francisco and, therefore, had dual nationality until I was 21. Both of my parents' formal schooling ended with high school, but they were very much self-educated people beyond their formal education, well-read, interested in current events and had a variety of cultural interests. Their lack of formal education, and any particular trade skills, and also the fact that they were not American citizens, made it particularly difficult for them during the time of the depression. My father lost his job with the United Fruit Company in early 1931, and my mother was obliged to go to work when I was only six weeks old. She went to work in an insurance company and this was the main source of our family income for most of the depression years. My dad was unable to get steady work after losing his job in 1931. Finally, they decided that they would emigrate to New Zealand and try their luck there. My father went to New Zealand in advance. My mother and I followed him in early or mid-1938 and, ironically, we went on the same ship, the Aorangi, that I returned on many years later in 1951.

*Q: How did you like growing up in New Zealand?*

MARSH: It was really a wonderful place to grow up. Originally I had a bit of a rough time. I arrived there at age seven or seven and a half. I obviously had an American accent, and at that time prior to World War II, very few New Zealanders had any exposure to Americans, and so the kids picked on me quite a bit because of my accent. I would fight back, and consequently, it was a rough time for me during those initial months and I was actually expelled from the first school for fighting. My parents put me in a private school and I settled down after that although I never really lost my American accent.

*Q: Why did you return to the States?*

MARSH: As a kid growing up, I always considered myself to be an American and I registered with the American consulate as soon as I could. As a teenager, I remember

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being invited to the Fourth of July cocktail parties, which I thought were great fun especially since no one seemed to mind that I was under the drinking age. When I graduated from high school, my parents wanted me to continue my education at the university in New Zealand. Throughout my childhood my parents had always stressed the importance of getting a university education not only for broadening one's interests, but also to gain a skill and a degree to help protect against the situation they had faced during the depression years. Their own depression experience influenced their entire lives and hearing all their stories of how difficult times were and what FDR did to stimulate the economy undoubtedly had left a deep impression on me and indeed may have been one of the reasons I chose economics as a profession. When I graduated from high school, there was no question in my mind that I would continue on to university, but I decided I wanted to go to college in the United States. When I was 18 years old, I went to the American consulate to register for the draft and hoped they were willing to pay my passage back to the U.S. The consulate officer, unfortunately, said they would excuse me from service since I was unable to pay my way back. I decided at that point to work for a while until I could save enough money to return to the States to continue my higher education. It took me almost three years to accumulate enough to make the trip and finance the first few months of college. If I may add an aside here and tell a Foreign Service related story. When I was registering for the draft I asked the Consulate Officer if I could meet with him to get some advice on my future plans. He agreed and at the meeting I began to explain to him that my intention was to return to the United States, attend university, and then perhaps try to join the Foreign Service. At that point, he said, "Young man, I think your chances of joining the Foreign Service are very slight. We are looking for people who grew up in America, have typical American values, and I doubt that you would qualify given all the time you have spent living in New Zealand." In retrospect I'm glad I was just 18 and didn't easily accept his advice, especially one that I didn't want to hear. I started a variety of different day and night jobs and began to save in earnest. My parents helped me pay the boat fare to Canada and I finally left New Zealand

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in September of 1951 and after a three week passage, I arrived in Vancouver and then caught a Greyhound bus down to California. I was 20 years old.

*Q: What did you do when you returned to the U.S.?*

MARSH: Soon after I arrived I went to the University of California to see if I could be admitted to their undergraduate program. While they were willing to accept me, I had to pay out-of-state residence fees, which was financially impossible for me in those days. So I elected not to go to the University of California and attended the City College of San Francisco instead. There were no tuition fees at all, the faculty was outstanding, having benefitted from the U.C. loyalty oath requirement that drove many U.C. professors to seek employment elsewhere. I spent two years at City College and then transferred to U.C. Berkeley as a junior.

*Q: What did you study at the university?*

MARSH: I was always in the field of economics. In the latter couple of years of my undergraduate study, I specialized in international trade and in development economics. I graduated in '57 and continued on to graduate school. At graduate school I continued to concentrate on development economics and international trade. My thesis was on The Post War Balance of Payment Problems of New Zealand. I was a teaching assistant in economics for one year, and after I graduated, I tried to get overseas work but finally accepted a job in San Francisco. During this job search time I had applied to The International Cooperation Agency (ICA) and they had responded by saying that there were no available jobs at the time but they would keep my name on file. I took this as a kind of "don't call us, we'll call you" response and didn't give it much more thought.

Joined AID as a Management Intern - 1959

*Q: How did you get involved with AID?*

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MARSH: When I finished graduate school it was a recession year and good jobs were hard to find. While it wasn't what I really wanted I was none-the-less fortunate to obtain a position in the economic section of the Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco. After being with them for several months I received a letter from ICA, AID's predecessor agency, asking me if I would like to participate in the management intern training program for the coming year. I responded enthusiastically with a "yes," and after a local interview and completing various formalities, I was accepted into the 1959 Management InterProgram.

*Q: The intern program was in Washington, DC?*

MARSH: Yes it was. The program started in on the day after Labor Day with a 16 week orientation class. There were about 23 people in the class. After this we were supposed to spend a year in Washington rotating around between various departments within the agency. However, during the last week of orientation I was called to an office one day and was told that the person who had been studying to go to Nepal for the past year had developed gall stones just before he was scheduled to depart for the field and, therefore, was unable to go. The Mission had cabled Washington that they needed someone urgently and I was asked if I would be willing to forego the rest of the intern program and go directly to Nepal? To which I said, "give me about 30 seconds to think it over". I left for Nepal in December. When I was accepted into the intern program I had been scheduled to go to Karachi; and when I reflect back on my career I realize that the gallstones of someone I never knew changed my whole life.

*Q: So Nepal was your first post. It happened much sooner than you anticipated?*

MARSH: Yes, that's correct on both counts. Nepal was my first post. I was single so it was easy to adapt to an early departure schedule and of course I was excited to be going off to this, almost mythical, remote region of the world. I must say that of all the many interesting experiences I had with AID, Nepal still stands out as one of the most outstanding parts of my career.

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First overseas assignment in USAID/Nepal - 1959

*Q: What were your first impressions?*

MARSH: I was very eager to start and fascinated to be able to begin my career in such a romantic and physically beautiful setting. It was a wonderful time to be in Nepal. The Mission had only just opened up within the year. It was very new, and I was there right in the beginning of the whole program. For me it was a new adventure which proved to be filled with many challenges and great feelings of achievement.

*Q: What kind of duties did you assume when you arrived in Kathmandu?*

MARSH: That's kind of an interesting story. When I flew into Calcutta, I missed the connecting plane to Kathmandu. In those days there were only one or two planes flying each week, the proverbial DC-3. I stayed at the Grand Hotel in Calcutta for a week and met a young consular officer who introduced me to some of his friends, and I ended up having a wonderful time and got to know and like the City during that one week unexpected stay. I, of course, arrived at Post a week late and was met at the airport by my boss, the program officer. On the way in from the airport he told me that my delayed arrival was unfortunate because that only gave us four days to overlap before he took off on home leave. It was a two person program office, so my first couple of months were sort of a "baptism of fire."

*Q: How did you survive that?*

MARSH: In hindsight I think quite well. It was a small Mission, and everyone was quite helpful and understanding but by necessity I had to become a fast learner. I do recall on the second or third day after I was there, someone came in from Washington to give a briefing. She used a lot of acronyms, and also assumed a certain knowledge on the part of the audience about the system in general. After the briefing, everybody was very complimentary and said how informative and clear the briefing had been. I felt a little

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chagrined since I had hardly understood a word she said. But, in a couple of months in the thick of things I learned a lot on the job. It was a quick initiation into the AID system.

*Q: What were some of your early experiences?*

MARSH: One of my most interesting experiences involved helping bring about a fixed exchange rate between the Nepalese and Indian rupee. This was one of the times when I needed to draw heavily on my training in economics, suddenly all the theories became reality. It was a truly exhilarating experience and at the time I remember that I could not believe that all this was actually happening and that I was somehow right in the middle of it. It was an exciting and interesting time. I saw all of the things I had studied about actually unfolding before me. It was a fascinating episode in my career, and probably more importantly, it worked. Fortunately, the Mission had a program economist on staff, an economics professor from Vanderbilt, Bill Thweat, and he provided the sound underpinnings that gave the Nepalese officials the confidence and courage to undertake this bold move. I was able to work closely with Bill Thweat and the Governor of the Central Bank, with whom I had become good friends by this time. We all worked closely together to develop and plan all of the steps necessary to get the right environment and select the right time for this event to happen. The USAID Mission was able to facilitate the process and help in a variety of ways. One particular action that I recall very well because I thought that it really enhanced the chances for success and again gave the Government the additional confidence it needed to pull this off. The USAID program included a large multi-year road construction project; the usual practice was to disburse these funds on an annual basis as the money was needed. But at this time, as part of the exchange rate stabilization strategy, the Mission was able to arrange with Washington to forward fund the total "life-of-project" amount so at the appointed time we were able to deposit this large amount of hard currency into the Government's account. This had the effect of increasing the Central Bank's foreign currency reserves to a level that gave them the additional financial strength they needed to declare a fixed exchange rate. On the day we made the deposit, the Central Bank closed. The next day they declared a fixed exchange rate, and

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it held. If I might at this point be permitted another anecdotal digression, during the course of working closely with the young Governor of the Central Bank, we became very good friends. As is the custom in Nepal, it is quite acceptable for males to hold hands. At some point, someone observed me holding hands with the Governor of the Bank and reported this as suspicious behavior. I was taken to task and was able to explain it and allay any fears that I had suddenly become a security risk.

*Q: What were the consequences and advantages of having a fixed exchange rate?*

MARSH: There were many advantages of having a stable exchange rate, not the least of which gave the USAID Mission access to the U.S. controlled Indian rupees which were generated by the vast food program in India. Under the terms of this PL-480 program there was a small percentage of funds set aside and generated for U.S. usage. What they had in mind was support of embassies, local housing etc. We, however, were able to successfully argue that local costs of the U.S. program for Nepal constituted a legitimate use of these U.S. owned Indian rupees. We carefully worked out a program with the Nepalese government to use, and I recall the amount very vividly, 1.8 million dollars worth of Indian rupees to support specific projects within the program. This proposal was approved, and it really changed the whole character of the program in Nepal, as it turned out, much more than any of us envisioned.

*Q: In what way did this influx of Indian rupees change the program?*

MARSH: As I mentioned earlier, we planned to implement a program of 1.8 million dollars worth of rupees, but we were in for a big surprise. In the 1960, or, perhaps it was 1961, I can't quite remember, King Mahendra visited the U.S. on an official visit. While he was having a meeting with President Eisenhower, the President asked him if there was any particular thing the U.S. could do to help his country develop. He expressed enthusiasm about their recently acquired ability to use Indian rupees and said he would really appreciate getting some more. The next thing we knew at the Mission was a



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cable from AID/Washington saying that we had been allotted 15 million dollars worth of PL-480 rupees, but that they must be obligated fully by June 30 of that year. This gave us about two months to accomplish this task. This was without a doubt the most frantic and wild experience of my entire AID career. We literally went over every line item in the government's development budget to find out what we could legitimately cover. Then we began to develop project agreements for every one of these line items or series of line items that we felt would make a reasonable development program. We wrote so many program agreements in that short period of time that I'm sure we must have broken some record or other. On June 30 however, all 15 million dollars had been obligated through signed project agreements. I must admit, however, that during the next couple of years, much of our time was spent trying to negotiate ourselves out of some of the mistakes we made in that wild obligation frenzy.

*Q: Do you recall any one in particular?*

MARSH: Yes there is one I think I'll never forget; in fact, it became sort of a standing joke between us and the Ministry of Planning. In our haste to tie up the funds we had somehow overlooked a line item which said "Elephant Herd Maintenance." It was quite a sizable amount, but somehow no one focused on it at the time and it slipped though unnoticed. After the dust settled down and we began to review the documentation, we came across this item. To our horror we found out that these weren't even working elephants. They were, in fact, primarily used for hunting tiger and rhino. When we told the Secretary of Planning it would be disastrous for us to use U.S. resources for these purposes, Congress would just not understand and would get very upset, he fully understood what we were saying. He agreed that they would not draw down on this line item, but we would find ways to reprogram these funds to other legitimate uses as we went through the program, and in turn they would find other sources of funds to feed the elephants. In the early days I spent in Nepal this kind of understanding and the "give and take" typified our relationship with the Government. These events that I have been relating all occurred within the first year of

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my arrival .In this relatively short period of time I witnessed many changes and lots of things happened both to the government of Nepal and the USAID program itself.

*Q: When you arrived in Nepal, did they have a democratically elected government?*

MARSH: Yes, they had the Congress Party which was very closely associated with the Congress Party of India. It was democratically elected; the Prime Minister was B.P. Koirala. It was fairly socialistic and very development-minded. In fact, the events surrounding the fixed exchange rate and all of the things I have mentioned in that period did occur during the Congress regime. It was shortly after that the King staged a bloodless coup and took over the government. I remember that day quite vividly. The staff of USAID was quite small and although I was a junior officer, I would be occasionally asked to attend the country team meeting. On this particular day, I was at the country team meeting and we had been discussing about the rumors of the impending coup, and it was the general consensus that this probably would not occur until after Queen Elizabeth's visit to Nepal where the King was going to be her host. As we were concluding the report, we looked out the window and saw that the embassy was being surrounded by Nepalese soldiers, and lo and behold, the coup had taken place. When the new regime took over, there was obviously a period of adjustment and getting to know the new people we were working with. Fortunately for me at least, the new Secretary of Planning was a young graduate student from Claremont College in California. His name was Bekh Thapa. I think he was 26 years old at the time and we were approximately the same age and quickly bonded. Over time we became very close friends which professionally was very helpful and socially delightful. We are still close friends. Bekh later became Minister of Planning, Minister of Finance, Governor of the Central Bank, and later ambassador to the United States, and is currently Nepalese ambassador to India. Our close friendship and age proximity allowed us to do many things that were informal that would be helpful to both sides in planning and developing the program. It was a wonderful relationship and one I cherished. When the new Program Officer, Victor Morgan, arrived, he also became part of this very close knit

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friendship which was enormously helpful in developing the program in Nepal and added greatly to quality and fulfillment of the assignment.

*Q: How long was your assignment in Nepal?*

MARSH: I was in Nepal for four and a half years. I arrived in Kathmandu in December, 1959, and was single at the time. Toward the end of my second tour I married, Mung Hsueh, who owned and operated the Imperial Hotel in Kathmandu. In June, 1964, my wife and her two children from a previous marriage left Nepal. At this time we didn't have an onward assignment. After home leave in the United States we were assigned to Brazil and later to Colombia. In 1966 my wife was unfortunately diagnosed with leukemia and died a few years later after we returned to the States. As for the tour in Nepal, I really look back on it with very fond memories and feel that it was a very maturing point in my life, both professionally and personally.

*Q: Was the program in your opinion effective during the time you served there?*

MARSH: Yes, I believe it was. There is no doubt in my mind our presence in Nepal was very important and made a big difference. The government, in my opinion had two primary goals. One was to maintain its independence from India, and the second was to catapult itself into the 20th. century. Nepal had been isolated for so long, and they were now determined to modernize. I think they would have done so without our help. I believe that the program which provided a lot of training, advice, and support enabled them to bring about these changes in a more rational way and with less pain for their population. That is not to say that we did not make a lot of mistakes in the program. We did. For one thing, I think we were not sufficiently sensitive to environmental concerns in those days. In hindsight, I think it was probably a mistake to try to increase government revenue by having them operate a sawmill. While this didn't create the deforestation crisis, it certainly must have added to the problem. Our attempts at reforestation never really received government political support and were not very effective. But, by and large, I think our

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emphasis on training and institutional development backed up with the substantial local currency resources, did pay off.

*Q: Weren't you concerned about the Nepalese ability to sustain this level of development?*

MARSH: Yes we were, and this was even before the agency became enamored with the buzz- word “sustainability”. But, we were very mindful that the Nepalese needed to prepare themselves to ultimately pick up recurring costs of their development programs and were painfully aware of the limitations of their resources. We did make some attempts to increase their revenue. For instance, we did have a tax collection improvement project. We had a number of public service, public administration improvement projects to increase the efficiency of government and cut costs. These were effective, but as we all know institutional development is a very slow process. I feel that the fact we were able to have these substantial budget support programs was essential. Because Nepal was starting so far back on the development spectrum, they had a lot of catching up to do, and I think this sizable amount of money that we were able to use as budget support really enabled them to get a jump start on development.

*Q: You certainly sound very up beat about the program. Were there any particular factors you can identify that might explain these achievements?*

MARSH: In my view, a lot of it had to do with the fact that USAID in those days had a lot fewer congressional restrictions. The field had more freedom and ability to act and respond in a timely fashion to needs and situations as they arose. Certainly that made life a lot easier and in my view a lot more exciting. The agency was much more action oriented in those days also, and they were willing to take risks. Many decisions could be made in the field, and the planning and action response time was much less than it is today. The fact that the field had so much authority, and it was really a substantial delegation of authority. We could move money between projects. The Mission could start new projects with specific dollar limits for the life of project funding. That simply gave us much more

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flexibility and a much greater ability to move, to take advantage of certain circumstances, and to try to fix things that went wrong before they became major problems.

One example that comes to mind that I remember very well was we had procured some equipment for a well-drilling project in the southern part of the country in the Tarai area. This drill rig, which was quite large, came complete with a drill operator, all part of the same procurement package. When it arrived in Nepal, it turned out that this was the wrong kind of rig for the particular kind of soil conditions in the Tarai. So, after some thought we decided to transfer the equipment to a new project we created in the field and move the rig up to the Kathmandu Valley which actually had a water supply shortage because most of the runoff was in the other direction. There was a good deal of ground water available but an insufficient number of wells for the main population centers in the valley. The operator of the drilling rig agreed to drive it up the narrow, winding, steep road, which was Nepal's only land link with the outside world. This was no mean feat; afterwards, he told us he wore out three sets of leather gloves just pulling that rig around the numerous bends and curves for which the "Rajpath " was renowned. Anyway, this impressive piece of equipment finally arrive in the Valley. The Mission set up the project with the Government agency responsible for local water supply and a new project was born. Granting in the equipment and operator and allocating small amounts of local currency kept the total costs within the allowable limits, which I think was \$100,000 over the life of the project. Within days water began to flow. There was one unexpected problem that arose. Whether the water initially came out of the ground, it had a gas like odor. We had the water tested and were assured it was not harmful and indeed the smell would dissipate after a short time. However, the rumor spread that the smell indicated the water had evil spirits in it. These rumors were further encouraged by some of our detractors who did not wish the project to succeed. So we had a problem.

*Q: What do you mean by detractors?*

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MARSH: At that time, we seemed to be in a public relations competition with the Chinese program and there was pretty good indication that they were helping spread these rumors. Anyway, as long as the people felt this water contained evil spirits we were unable to hook up these new wells as part of the drinking water system. So, we finally came up with a simple solution. We arranged to invite a holy man (preselected) to the inaugural ceremony and his job was to rid the evil spirits from the water before it was hooked up to the main system. Everyone was happy and what could have been a protracted and serious issue was nipped in the bud at a very low cost. Another story that I enjoy recounting, to illustrate the advantages of the amount of field autonomy prevailing at this time, concerned a cable operated ferry boat. Again this was a Mission initiated project to link two trading communities along the Narani river together by providing a cable operated ferry to cross at this particular juncture of the river. The villagers had asked for funds and the Government wanted to respond favorably since the benefits were very intuitively demonstrable, and the costs were really very minimal, but there was no hydrological data available on the river flow upon which to base the design. It would have been, I might add, very costly and difficult to get this data. The costs and logistics would have made the project unfeasible. However, on its merits the project sounded pretty good. We had an engineer on our staff who went down and spent a couple of days looking at what little data there was, making some assumptions and best guesses and designed a system. It was built locally and there was great joy and jubilation when it started operating. In the following year, however, the monsoon rains were unusually heavy and the ferry broke off its moorings and was washed away and beached a few miles down the river. As soon as the rain subsided, the villagers, and I think probably with the help of the government, dispatched two elephants down to retrieve this ferry and pull it back, and it was soon back in operation. I think possibly these elephants were from the herd we used to support, but I'm not sure. I do remember enjoying writing this cable to Washington explaining what had happened. I bring up these stories just to illustrate the amount of flexibility we had in those days. How, without engaging in a lengthy dialogue and justification to AID/W, the Nepal Mission could be innovative and be responsive to small projects with immediate short term payoff, while

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at the same time employing most of its energy and efforts to longer term problems such as health, education, agriculture and other key sectors of the economy.

In this interview I decided that I would dwell on some of these behind the scenes events that are seldom recorded. Many of these things helped shape the program and certainly had an influence on the pace of implementation. The operating freedom the Missions had in those days also had its downside. The highest price the agency paid was in the area of Congressional accountability. What we told Congress about the project at the time of the Congressional Presentation often bore little resemblance to what the final outcome was. We all knew this couldn't go on forever, but while it lasted, it was wonderful. The morale of the Kathmandu Mission was very high. There was a high sense of purpose and a feeling that we really were bringing about change. Much of the time I spent in Nepal was during the Kennedy era, and that certainly was, in my view, the golden age of the agency. There was a very prevailing "can do" attitude both in the field and in Washington. Two-thirds of the staff were overseas, one third in Washington. There was a high level of commitment, idealism, and everything was a recipe for motivated effective development. We worked sometimes around the clock, but there were very few complaints because we had a lot of gratification and a feeling of accomplishment. Also at this time, and I think this made a big difference, Nepal had been isolated for so long; they had just come out of isolation. The Nepalese government was new; they hadn't become jaded. They were very receptive to new ideas, very willing to talk about things openly and candidly. By nature they are wonderful friendly people and this certainly had a lot to do with this highly constructive work environment. It was a great experience to work there. I got to know people from all levels of the community. One of my close friends was an ex-Ghurka sergeant who was just a wonderful fellow working in the USAID GSA. Another person I became very close to was the Third Prince of Nepal; the Secretary of Planning was a close friend of mine, as was the Governor of the Central Bank, and the list goes on. It was just a wonderful place to work. I think during the time I was there, we very much set the stage for future development. AID has continued its relationship with Nepal for many years. Obviously, as things changed,

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the ground rules changed, the government became more sophisticated and perhaps a little less open in its dealings. Changing time and different situation requiring different approaches and different sets of solutions. but, during the 60s I think the ground had been laid for what is happening now and what will continue to happen in Nepal for quite some time.

Transferred to USAID/Brazil - 1964

*Q: So Brazil was your second post with AID.*

MARSH: That's correct, but when I left Nepal, I had no idea what my next onward assignment would be. I was surprised and, pleasantly I might add, to learn that we were being posted to Rio de Janeiro. As is not unusual in AID, the post wanted us there right away. There was no time for language training, and I was supposed to get Portuguese lessons when I arrived at post. But as is often the case, work takes over and there was no time to study the language. I was in class for about two weeks, but the pressure of work meant that I had to forego the class. This is one of the regrets and one of the few regrets I have about the assignment. I never really became proficient in Portuguese. Other than that, it was a very challenging, exciting, and professionally rewarding experience. As in the case of my first post, I was very lucky. It was an ideal time to be assigned to Brazil. The pro-leftist government had just been overthrown and the military government of Castelo Branco had just got in and seemed quite moderate. They were very eager to strengthen ties with the United States and the U.S. was also eager to extend its program into Latin America. In a sense, Brazil became the center piece of the Alliance for Progress. At this point, the military dictatorship was not unduly harsh, at least it seemed to us to be that way. Later it became more repressive. Rio was a wonderful place to live, and at that time very safe, which is not the case today.



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*Q: Going from Nepal ,which was a small mountainous kingdom, and then going to Brazil where Rio was a big metropolitan city, must have been quite a cultural shock for you. How did you manage to cope with that?*

MARSH: Yes, it was a cultural shock. It was as different as night is from day, but we settled down rather quickly, and enjoyed life in the “big city” as well as the beaches and wonderfully vibrant people. The work was quite demanding and quite absorbing. In the first few weeks I was quite deeply enmeshed and needed to often work late into the night. I was the Assistant Program Officer at that time, but the Program Officer left after I had been there only a couple of weeks. This only left two Americans in the office, myself and a young and very talented State Department officer who was assigned to AID for a tour so he could become familiar with AID procedures.

*Q: Who was the State Department guy?*

MARSH: Sam Lewis, who later had a very distinguished career in the foreign service and served for many years as our ambassador to Israel. Sam, at that point, knew very little about how AID functioned, but in a sense it was an ideal division of labor. Sam was familiar and comfortable in the policy side of the program, and I concentrated my efforts on the programming and implementation side. We worked very well as a team. The program itself was very large and complex. It consisted of a very large program loan, very large and quite a number of capital development loans, and at this time it was the largest technical assistance program in AID, or one of the largest, and certainly the largest in Latin America, plus there were PL-480 programs and a large number of nongovernmental organizations involved in the program. The Program Office focused on overseeing the technical assistance part of the program. We were understaffed but fortunately had the strong support from the office of management headed by Bill Parks. They took a lot of the administrative load off of what was normally a program function. Apart from the sheer size of the program, it was further complicated by the fact there were numerous sub projects. They called them units of management or project activities. At one point I calculated

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there were 150 separate and active project activities on the books. Project responsibility was divided between two offices, one in Recife and the headquarters office in Rio. The Recife office had a good deal of autonomy and in many ways functioned more like an independent Mission; they used to call themselves the Recife Mission responsible for the programs in the northeast, and refer to Rio as having ROB (rest of Brazil) responsibilities. This administrative arrangement required a lot of coordination between the two offices. Sometimes it went quite smoothly and other times it caused tensions which were always resolved but not without a lot of extra time and effort on everyone's part.

*Q: Wasn't that a lot of projects for a two person office to keep track of?*

MARSH: Yes it was. It was only possible really because we had a well-trained and dedicated Brazilian staff. They not only were extremely capable but they were willing and able to work extra time, sometimes even around the clock. I cannot heap enough praise on the Brazilian staff. It was quite outstanding and one of the most professional staffs I have ever had the pleasure to work with anywhere. This really made the task possible. A new Program Officer was finally recruited, but that was only a year after I had been there. Later on, two Assistant Program Officers were added. But as I mentioned, the Recife office operation had its own staff, and of course they took some of the administrative load for the projects that were centered in the northeast. I served under three Mission Directors during my time in Rio, Jack Kubisch when I first arrived, then Stuart Van Dyke and later Bill Ellis. All three were experienced officers used to managing large organizations. They knew very well the importance of delegation, and I always appreciated their management style and the trust they put in my ability to take care of the day-to-day running of the programs under my charge. This contributed greatly to our ability to handle such a large portfolio. My authority was always clearly defined and quite extensive, and I felt very comfortable making decisions. I always felt I would be supported as long as I was operating within my authority. For me this was a very important factor in being able to manage such a program,

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and in fact in my opinion, the only way a program of this complexity could have been managed.

*Q: During this assignment, were there any particular events or tasks that stand out or that you would like to comment on.*

MARSH: Yes, I can think of several. Let me concentrate on one that put my management skills to their greatest test. Unlike my first post where I was working pretty much across the board in a small program, in this case I pretty much concentrated on the technical assistance aspect of the program and as I mentioned earlier, it was a large complex program, and it required a lot of operational and management discipline. The Mission was organized into technical officers; each dealt directly with the appropriate Ministries. The Program Office had very little to do directly with these technical Ministries, but we did work closely with the Ministry of Planning. The task that really stands out in my mind was the preparation of the Annual Program Submission. This actually began a few weeks after I arrived. The Brazil Mission submitted one document to AID/W requesting funding and approval for all the projects including those operating in the northeast but as I mentioned earlier the Recife Mission operated fairly independently and was very protective of its autonomy. The need to submit a combined single program document did create some friction resulting in a traditional headquarters vs. field office stand off situation, with Rio in this case being the headquarters. The procedure was for AID to assign a planning figure for all of Brazil, and then it was up to the Brazilian Mission or Missions to allocate the funds between the two regions. Needless to say, it was a time of intense lobbying, appealing decisions, and arriving at some kind of compromise. The annual program exercise is always a difficult challenge, but having to allocate funds between the needs and priorities of two competing offices within one program compounded the difficulty of the task. It was a nightmare. There were intensive negotiations going on throughout the whole process. Every time we made a change there were a myriad of program documentation changes that would have to be made in order to make the supporting documentation consistent with the program being planned, and this was before we had computers. I

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would often have the entire local Controllers staff working through the night to get all the various parts of the document to jibe. Somehow it all worked out. We met the deadlines and produced the combined single document and still managed to maintain friendly relationships between the two competing offices; but it was at times quite stressful and difficult.

*Q: So what you are saying is you had more problems dealing within the agency itself than with the host government.*

MARSH: That's right. I think a lot of our energies were spent arguing in house. I suppose the technical divisions did the arguing with the ministries before they got the submitting programs to us, but it was a very intense time. As I said, somehow we managed to get through it. I remember one error that occurred during the whole process of trying to put this tome together. It was a particular livestock program that we were touting, and we somehow got the before and after photographs of the research animals mixed up. This did not serve to illustrate the point we really wanted to make, but it was a great source of amusement and probably added a little levity to what was a pretty serious and sometimes dreary document.

*Q: How long did you stay in Rio?*

MARSH: Actually I only served in Rio for 20s months. I shortened my tour.

*Q: Why was that?*

MARSH: Towards the end of my first tour in Rio I was offered the Program Officer's job in Bogot#, if I were willing to agree to a direct transfer to Colombia. After initially declining the offer I was persuaded that this would be in my best career interests and accepted. In hindsight, I regret this decision, but at the time I felt that it would allow me to continue operating at the same level I had become accustomed to in Brazil. By this time the Rio Program Office was fully staffed. The new Program Officer had arrived, two additional

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assistant program officers had been added to the staff and I thought that this was a good time for me to transfer to a position of greater responsibility. The Rio Mission graciously agreed to let me go. We left with very mixed feelings four months before my first tour was due to end. From a personal and career point of view, I believe I learned a great deal about program management while serving in Brazil. I appreciated the support and trust I got from the top management and feel that the experience I gained in Rio really served me well in my future assignments with AID. It was a very rewarding to work in Brazil. The quality of the direct hire and contract staff was uniformly high. The program was well planned and well executed. It was a pleasure working with the Brazilians, and I also enjoyed living in Rio very much. So I look back on my second post in much the same way as I do on my first; with fond memories, offering an opportunity to grow and a great feeling of accomplishment.

Early transfer to USAID/Colombia as Program Officer - 1966

*Q: When did you arrive in Colombia?*

MARSH: I arrived in Colombia in April of 1966.

*Q: What was your position there?*

MARSH: My official title was program officer, but the Mission was structured in a different way than what I had normally been used to. I think over time the position of program officer in AID had changed. The program office was under an officer called the Assistant Director for Programming. In the old days I think this was more akin to what the program officer was. So, when I assumed my new duty, I really did not have as much independent authority as I had been used to because the structure of the office was quite different and my immediate supervisor was reluctant to delegate responsibility to his staff. I admired the toMission management, Jim Fowler, who was a very tough and able manager; his deputy was also a very fair and broad-minded person as well as being very capable, but I

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found my own position in the Mission quite restrictive and unrewarding. I did not enjoy my assignment in Colombia.

*Q: What was the focus of the Colombian program, and how long did you work there?*

MARSH: The centerpiece of the program was a very sizable program loan and the various negotiations that went along with it. The technical assistance program was less central to our overall interest but was an important component of the total assistance package. It was a fairly large program. Apart from working in the usual sectors of health, education, and agriculture, there were also sizable projects in Public Safety and Civic Action, where the Colombian military were using their armed forces to do public works construction. The security situation at the time was rather tense and this was an overriding consideration in a lot of the events and activities that we undertook.

*Q: Even in those days there was security tension?*

MARSH: Yes, very much so, probably not dangerous as it is now but, nonetheless, quite violent. There was a lot of guerrilla activity in the hills and burning of villages and shooting up of buses. It was not a particularly safe place to be, although Bogotá was usually relatively quiet and safe.

*Q: How long did you stay in Bogotá?*

MARSH: Well, actually we only stayed there for about fourteen months. We had been in Bogotá a little over a year when my wife fell ill and was diagnosed with a terminal disease. At the same time, and somewhat coincidentally, AID in Washington approved a training request I had made much earlier when I was still in Brazil. The Colombian Mission were aware of this pending request and were very gracious, and agreed to let me go. They also understood and supported my desire to come back to the U.S. where my wife could get the best available medical treatment. I then applied to the John F. Kennedy School

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of Public Administration at Harvard, and was accepted, and we left Colombia in June of 1967.

A sabbatical at Harvard - 1967

*Q: So you were at the JFK school for about a year.*

MARSH: Yes, I was there for an academic year.

*Q: What were some of the courses that you took there?*

MARSH: I had pretty free reign. I was permitted to take whatever courses that I felt would contribute to my own personal growth and enhance my value to the Agency. My main focus was on management with a particular emphasis on development. I took some courses in the Business School, including introductory computer courses and a management information course (the Wang computer was just coming into AID at that time and it seemed obvious that this was just the beginning). At the Kennedy School itself I continued to take courses in economic development as well as courses in public affairs and urban development. It was pretty broad ranging and I think a very good experience insofar as it let me reflect on what I had been doing and think about ways to refocus on future development and policy issues.

*Q: After you did your year at Harvard, where did you go on from there?*

New assignment in the Latin America Bureau and the NSC - 1968

MARSH: During the last few months at Harvard when I was beginning to wind down the year, I did go to Washington to explore possibilities for my next assignment. I was at the time in the Latin American bureau, and at this period of time AID and State Department worked very closely together in what they called "back-to-back" offices.

*Q: What do you mean by back-to-back offices?*

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MARSH: This was an attempt to integrate State Department and AID management. For instance, if there were a State Department Director of the office, there would be an AID Deputy Director of the office and vice-versa. Because of the Alliance for Progress, the AID/Latin America bureau was more closely tied to the State Department than the other AID bureaus. So, when I was being interviewed for potential new assignments, one of the people I talked to was Peter Vaky, who was an ex-ambassador, and was now in charge of what they called the inter-department group staff which was an attempt to coordinate and rationalize all of the foreign affairs programs that the U.S. was involved in. He was particularly interested in having me come and join his staff. Ambassador Vaky was also talking to a young State Department foreign service officer, Brayton Redekker, who was just completing a year's training at MIT specializing in systems analysis. He ended up recruiting both of us to work on his staff. I became the AID representative in this office which had an extremely long title. I believe, if I can even remember, it was called the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Inter-American Affairs. I served as the Deputy Director of that office for two years, initially under Pete Vaky and then under Don Easum.

*Q: What did you actually do in this job?*

MARSH: The first task under Pete Vaky was to design a system which they called the Country Assistance Strategy Paper, or CASP for short. This was to be a Country Team effort, the objective of which was to relate U.S. resources to U.S. interests. This document would then serve as an umbrella for all of the agencies and departments working overseas to do their own planning and budgeting within the general framework and guidelines set out in the approved CASP document. The idea was to have the Country Team prepare this paper and send it into Washington to be reviewed by the Interdepartmental Group (ID). The membership of the ID was drawn from the top ranks of each Department or Agency represented and chaired by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. The AID representative was the Assistant Administrator for LA, and all of the other



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agencies like Defense, both civilian and military, were represented at a similarly high level. Both sides of CIA were represented. This was the core group which would often be expanded to include Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury and other interested departments depending upon their interest in the agenda. The way the system was supposed to work was that when the various country teams sent their CASP documents in, the ID would review it and summarize their evaluation and consensus of the group. Decisions and comments from these reviews were then formalized in a National Security Memorandum; each NSM was assigned a number and these memoranda would be sent to all of the concerned departments and agencies, and of course, to the National Security Council itself. The NSMs would then be used as policy guidelines for the various U.S. country or regional programs within Latin America. The IG staff served as the Secretariat and Staff support for the Group.

*Q: Working with the IG Staff seemed quite different from your previous AID assignments.*

MARSH: Yes, in some ways it was. It was certainly a unique experience, but I was able to draw upon a lot of my previous planning and budgeting experience, as well as upon some of the course material I had taken at Harvard in systems analysis and management. I must say, dealing with so many departments and agencies, each with their own priorities and often different agendas, and trying to help guide the process towards reaching a recordable decision was an enlightening and interesting experience. It was also interesting to be in on the ground floor of this interdepartmental approach to policy making and planning. Even though it was conceived as a high level policy exercise and eventually became so, the beginning start-up weeks did not reflect this image. When we started, there were only two staffers, myself and Bray Redekker and because it was a new unit we had not yet been assigned office space. We, nonetheless, needed to start work immediately, so were in the strange position of having to deal with highly classified material without having a secure area to work . I still look back with amazement at our daily routine when we first began this assignment. Our first task would be to commandeer a GSA shopping cart and we would then appear at the Assistant Secretary's office, gather

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the material we needed, put it into the shopping cart, traipse off to some vacant office where we would work for the day. At lunch time we would again load up the shopping cart and push it back to the secure area and then repeat the process after lunch or at any time we were required to attend a meeting. It seemed kind of ironic dealing with such heady stuff and wandering around the halls of the State Department like a couple of homeless people with a shopping cart. Anyway, that is what happened for the first couple of weeks until we were assigned an office in a secure area and could function in a more conventional way.

*Q: After the system was designed, what was your function on the staff?*

MARSH: After the CASP system was designed, it was forwarded to the field for comments including a description of what would be required. The next task was sort of a "Mission Impossible." We were asked to use the same kind of system to prepare a Hemisphere Assistance Strategy Paper which was to be called a HASP. I must say that even though this part of the system never really got off the ground, it probably did serve a purpose. We prepared the first draft of the HASP and distributed it for comments. This document was the first and only draft we produced. It was provocative, controversial and at times outrageous but it did stimulate a lot of debate and made the various parties address some of the key issues from an interdepartmental perspective, which may, in fact, have been the real purpose behind the exercise. In any event, that particular interlude represented the beginning and the end of the HASP. However, the Country Assistance Strategy Paper system remained and the next task was for me and my colleague to travel to the field and describe the system, explain its purpose, and try to answer any questions or objections that the field had about the introduction of this new system.

*Q: How long did you work on this staff ?*

MARSH: I served a full two year tour, and after the first year, Ambassador Vaky went up to serve as the State Department NSC [National Security Council] representative, and Ambassador Easum came in as the Director of the Staff. Most of that time was devoted

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to serving the ID Group, preparing agendas for their meetings, recording decisions and preparing and negotiating their final text of the decision memoranda (NSMs.) After completing this assignment, I was returned to AID proper, and took a the more mainstream AID job. I was assigned to Washington to the Asia bureau and I worked in the office of Regional Economic Development, or RED as it was called.

Back to AID and the Asia Regional Office - 1970-1972

*Q: What was your job in this Regional Office?*

MARSH: The regional program in Washington was organized by economic sectors rather than by countries or groupings of countries. I was assigned the backstopping responsibilities for projects that dealt with transportation and communication. They were varied and interesting projects, and I was happy at the prospect of getting back to Asia which is one part of the world I have always had a deep affection for. The RED field office was located in Bangkok, and there were programs in countries throughout all of Southeast Asia. They ranged from airport relocation studies in Indonesia, container port feasibility studies for the port of Sadahip in Thailand, regional transportation surveys for the entire region, and a number of other smaller and varied activities. The concept of the regional programs was that RED should handle programs that could not be handled under a normal bilateral program because of their inter or multi-country implications. Although, I do recall one Mission Director liking the RED program to a cuckoo, saying "you guys come and lay eggs in other people's nests, then you leave and expect them to be raised by someone else," namely, the country Mission. Despite this interesting perception, I think RED played a legitimate and constructive role to foster projects that cut across boundaries to benefit the region as a whole. I believe most of the projects served to complement the bilateral programs.

One project sticks in my mind as being particularly interesting, and very imaginative even though it proved to be based on a shaky but unquestioned assumption, namely, that "our

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side” would win the war. This project was started during the height of the Vietnam War, AID had contracted with the architectural firm oWilliam, Pereira and Co. to draw up a long range plan for the conversion and development of the Tan Sen Nwet Airbase into a civilian airport. The contract called for projections of how the facility could be designed and expanded to better serve the city, once peace had been restored. It was a fascinating project to work on, especially since Bill Pereira himself became involved, and he used his wonderful creative talents and imagination to visualize how the airport could become a fully integrated part of the metropolitan transportation system and serve to minimize congestion through a system of decentralized terminals which would employ future technologies not too dissimilar from the concepts now used for cargo containerization. Pereira's presentations were spellbinding and the picture he painted of the future seemed both plausible and amazing at the same time. But, alas, it was not a future that was destined to happen, so the project really didn't accomplish much. Most of the other projects, however, turned out to be more relevant. The Regional Transportation Survey provided a great deal of data on shipping and port facilities and projected how they might serve to significantly increase interregional trade. The study of navigational aids in the Strait of Malacca drew attention to some of the high risks of oil spills and suggested ways of minimizing them. Other small projects sought to advise on improved search and rescue operations procedures, more compatible and improved communications networks and improving inter-island ferry service and safety, to name but a few. In 1971 RED helped organize a meeting of regional transportation Ministries. They met for one week in Tokyo to discuss common problems and potential common solutions and to establish a small permanensecretariat in Kuala Lumpur to help coordinate on an ongoing basis, a mechanism for addressing transportation issues relevant to the region. This was probably the first time that high officials from all the countries in the region had all met together to share some of their common concerns. It also was significant they agreed to continue this kind of interaction and association in the future and took action to establish a facilitating body in Kuala Lumpur.

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Toward the end of this assignment, I had an opportunity to participate in the intergovernmental Personnel Exchange Act and with the completion of the Asian assignment I moved on to work for a regional transportation authority in California.

Participated in the Intergovernmental Personnel Exchange Program - 1972-1976

*Q: Could you explain a little bit about this act?*

MARSH: Yes, Congress had just enacted this legislation, the concept was to bring about a greater understanding and more cooperation between state and local governments, educational institutions and the federal government. They did this through exchanging personnel with the idea that when each of them understood each other's working situations, they would be more understanding and more cooperative with each other and the sponsoring federal agency would gain from the broader exposure and experience their employees would be able to bring back to the parent organization. AID was one of the participating agencies and they agreed to assign me to the San Francisco Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission for two years. For me, this assignment was perfect both in timing and as a place to live. I had just remarried, and was starting to rebuild my life and this was a great opportunity to go back to my home base and also to apply some of the skills I had acquired in my time working in international development programs to see how applicable these were to domestic programs. The particular program I was assigned to, its purpose and task, was to rationalize the regional transportation systems for the whole area. There were a lot of jurisdictions and a lot of potential conflicts, and this was an attempt to resolve the issues in a way that would benefit the transportation system for the entire area. I found that my AID experience turned out to be surprisingly relevant, and my knowledge of the federal government procedures also turned out to be very helpful to this newly established fledgling organization, as they needed to interact more closely with federal government departments.

*Q: How long did you work for MTC and what was your job with it?*

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MARSH: I'll try to be brief on this one because it is quite a departure from the regular foreign service assignment and, therefore, not too relevant to an oral history of the foreign service; However, I do want to make a couple of comments on this part of my working experience to show how it may have influenced my management style and the perspectives I brought back to my future foreign service assignments. My initial task, when I joined the MTC or Metropolitan Transportation Commission, was to monitor a federally funded project with the University of California to collect data on the Bay Area Rapid Transit System with the idea of possibly doing an impact study sometime in the future. It turned out this study attracted the attention of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and HUD provided MTC with a \$16 million contract to do a comprehensive impact study of the BART system. The contract sought to measure the impact that the introduction of the system had on the environment, the social structure of the community, property values and auto traffic congestion, etc. I was in charge of putting this program together. After the first year, I assumed the position of Director of Research and Administration. Before the end of my tour there, MTC asked AID to extend my tour for another two years, and to my pleasant surprise, AID agreed. After four years outside of the agency, I returned to AID in April of 1976, a little uninformed about the new procedures, but perhaps a little less jaded and more charged up about my new assignment than I would have been if it had been just a case of regular routine rotation assignments. I think I learned more about managing a large staff; I had approximately 100 people in my department and I am sure that I improved my negotiating skills for achieving compromise and agreement between the various competing factions which was the name of the game. Being out of the agency for four years had definite career disadvantages but the added diversity of experience gained and the ability to meet new challenges more than offset the negative aspects of the assignment. It was wonderful to be back in the San Francisco Bay Area again but after four years I was eager to get another overseas posting and return to the line of work I had been trained for and truly enjoyed.

Returned to USAID in Liberia - 1976 - 1980

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*Q: So you returned to AID in 1976 and were assigned overseas?*

MARSH: Yes, I was then assigned to USAID in Monrovia. We flew from San Francisco to Washington, DC for a brief orientation and then took the Pan Am flight direct from New York to Monrovia, a trip that later became very familiar. At that time we had two children. Our daughter was only five months old, and our active son was two and a half. We were picked up at the airport and moved into temporary housing.

*Q: How long was your assignment in Liberia?*

MARSH: We served two full tours in Liberia plus a few extra months, so we were there for almost four and a half years. When we first arrived there, we were put in temporary housing which was adequate but it was during a time when Liberia had record rains. We had 200 inches of rain in a six month period which, in temporary housing, was a little difficult with two small children. But we were finally assigned our permanent house which was such a relief and we were able to finally get settled into our new home for the next three and a half years.

*Q: What was the nature of the Liberian program, and what was your position there?*

MARSH: The program was primarily technical assistance. They had a small capital development program, but they really didn't have the resources to be able to service loans, so we concentrated mainly on agriculture and health and increased government revenue through a tax improvement project. It was a fairly traditional small technical assistance program. The Mission was structured in a more conventional way. I was the Program Officer and there were two Assistant Program Officers, a Capital Development Officer, and later on, they added on a Design Officer. During the first tour the program was expanding quite rapidly. The U.S. had a longstanding and historic relationship with Liberia from the Nation's inception so the aid program had been around for a long time. Over the years it had its ups and downs but 1976 was a time of expansion. By the end of our first tour



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the program was moving along reasonably well, not always smoothly, for Liberia was not a particularly easy place to work and things often took a long time to get going, but we were beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel. The Liberian government while still tainted by corruption, was beginning to show signs of widening its political base. It was and is still a society of “haves” and “have-nots,” which broke down roughly into the American Liberians being the haves and the tribal people being the have-nots. Although, sometimes this distinction had become blurred because of the intermarriage between the two classes. It was also my impression at the time that although tribal distinctions were important, tribalism and tribal rivalry were not a major factor in the social structure; at least bitter rivalries and fighting between tribes was not apparent. When we left for home leave, we felt pretty good about the job and good about the post. We had settled in comfortably. We had quite a large number of friends in the international community, and we were very much looking to our second tour.

*Q: When you went back to Liberia after your home leave, did you find any noticeable difference between the first and second tour?*

MARSH: Not at first, but by the time we finished our second tour it was obviously a very different place. At the beginning of the second tour, things were moving along about at the same pace. We had started a new Housing Guarantee Program so there were opportunities for new innovations and ideas and this made the program more interesting. Liberia had an active Peace Corps program and I had been made the AID/Peace Corps liaison (a role I played and enjoyed in every post I served.) Also something happened midway through the second tour that was unexpected and made life even more interesting and, as it turned out, significantly effected my future foreign service career and beyond. A situation arose that resulted in the health officer having to abruptly leave post. It was over a year before we could find a suitable replacement. During this period I had become sort of the de facto health officer along with my other duties. This was significant because we were negotiating a fairly substantial health program with the ministry. The program was complex and there was a wide gap between what USAID felt it could deliver and



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what the Government felt it wanted. I spent a good deal of my second tour working on this program both on the design side and helping to implement the ongoing program. It was a new experience for me to be so deeply involved in a technical program, but I must say I enjoyed it immensely. Although we never were really successful in getting the program design completed during my watch, I found the experience rewarding and performing a more of a hands-on management function very satisfying.

*Q: On the whole, was it easy to work with the different ministries?*

MARSH: Yes and no. There were some ministries that were fairly easy to work with. The health ministry was a mixed bag. There were some members of the health ministry who were very articulate and very dedicated; there were others who were, shall I say, less dedicated and perhaps were more interested in furthering their own agendas and positions. Corruption in the government and indeed throughout the society was a problem but with patience and perseverance things could get done. There were enough able and relatively un-corrupt people we dealt with to make some forward progress possible and we were able to achieve some of the project objectives on schedule. So long as one was aware of the limitations of the system and cognizant of the various potential road blocks it was possible to achieve results, but there was always a constant struggle to avoid becoming frustrated or cynical.

*Q: Wasn't the minister the daughter of President Tolbert?*

MARSH: Yes. She was a medical doctor. She was married to the Minister of Defense. Her name was Wilhemina Holder. I always thought she was good at her job and very conscientious. She was well-trained and very dedicated and really impressed me as a concerned and even somewhat humble person, despite her ties with the ruling family. She was really quite ready to get out in the field and muck around in the mud and get the job done. She became the WHO representative, and after the coup returned to work in the

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Ministry of Health. It was in this latter context that I had quite a few dealings with her when I returned to Liberia on TDY in connection with a Regional Child Survival project.

*Q: You mentioned President Tolbert and the ruling family. I presume you were there during the coup.*

MARSH: Yes, we were there both during the so called "rice riot" which occurred in April of '79 and was brought about by the government cutting the subsidy on rice. There was major civil disruption at that time. Exactly a year later, the real coup d'état occurred resulting in the assassination of the President and establishment of the Doe regime. These were both fairly harrowing and grizzly experiences to have gone through.

*Q: It was a very bloody coup wasn't it?*

MARSH: Yes. It was extremely bloody and made even more stressful because many of the people that I had worked with closely for over three years were taken to the beach and summarily shot. I was particularly close to Minister of Planning, Minister Neal, who was a very gentle and wonderful man, a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics. He was shot along with many others the day after the coup. Many of my Liberian colleagues were jailed. Sam Green was the Deputy Assistant Minister for planning and I worked with him very closely almost on a daily basis. I was aware that he was diabetic and when we heard he was put into a notoriously harsh jail I was devastated and feared for his life. I did write letters and also contacted some of the humanitarian groups working for the release of these prisoners to make them aware of Sam Green's plight and of his exemplary record as a civil servant. Eventually he was released and I hope that I may have in some way contributed to this favorable outcome, but of course I will never know. For the most part, there was little or nothing we could do in this situation except try to think of ways to salvage parts of the USAID program and to somehow relieve the suffering and deplorable situation that the Liberian people now found themselves in. Yes, it was a really tough time to get through.

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While on the subject of the coup, I think a couple of “coup stories” might be in order and give a flavor of what things were like just before and after this event. There were two incidents that occurred just before the coup. They were unrelated but had some interesting implications. I might add the coup came as quite a surprise; as far as I know, no one expected this to happen as it did. The first indication we had that something was going on was when we turned off the bedroom window air conditioner in the morning and heard the sound of automatic weapons firing in the distance. We turned on the shortwave and picked up BBC London which reported what was happening a few blocks away. Anyway, just about three or four days before the coup I had sent all our passports into the foreign office to get our resident visas extended. Soon after the coup I had to drive around to check up on all the USAID people and I must say I was a little uneasy not having my passport on me. The only identification I had was a small wallet-size plastic card saying “I work for USAID” but it worked. The other thing which happened just a day or so before the coup involved our car. I had driven home for lunch and it was raining so the roads were very slippery. On the way back to the office some old market lady ran across the road in front of my car. I slammed on the brakes and slid into a telephone pole. Our Honda Civic was really mashed up but fortunately no one was hurt; the woman never even looked back. I didn't know it at the time but it probably was a blessing in disguise for this meant that our car was immobile and in the repair shop during and after the coup. Unlike many foreigners, we did not have to endure the ordeal of having the car stolen from us at gun point.

*Q: How was life for you after the coup?*

MARSH: Obviously it was pretty dramatic change from what we had been used to. The Mission closed down for several days. There was a dawn-to-dusk curfew and it was fairly dangerous to drive around. At the time, the Mission Director was out of the country, and I was Acting Deputy Director so I did have to drive around and check on people. There was little or no phone communication at that time and most of us did not have two-way radios. The few walky-talky radios the Mission owned had very short range. It was pretty

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hairy driving around town and there were times when things got quite tense. One good thing about the coup, from our point of view, was that it wasn't anti-American or directed against foreigners in particular but rather it pitted "the haves" against "the have-nots" and much of the hostility was directed towards the upper class Liberians, but sometimes we got caught in the crossfire. Fortunately, no one in the official American community was physically harmed, but we did go through some anxious moments and faced situations that were potentially dangerous. Let me recount a couple.

We lived a few miles out of town in an area called Congo town. There was a cluster of about four or five houses right on the beach; each had its own compound and gate and were some distance apart. We were somewhat isolated from the main foreign community; ironically, our gate had been broken and was repaired only two days before the coup. One evening a bus load of soldiers who had quite a bit to drink drove by and got stuck in the sand just outside of our house. Luckily for us there had been an electrical storm and power outage an hour or so before, and everything was in pitch darkness. The soldiers may have been unaware that our house was there or just too drunk to care but they were notably disturbed that their bus was stuck in the sand. I'm sure they had been out cruising around town intending to loot whatever they could. So, in their anger, they started shooting their machine guns in the air, and bullets started ricocheting off our house at which point we beat a hasty retreat into an internal staircase that was surrounded by concrete walls. We stayed there for several hours until they calmed down and went away leaving the bus behind. We were hoping against hope that they wouldn't break into the house, and fortunately for us they never did. I must say our kids performed very well; they kept totally quiet, so that incident passed without any serious consequences. The next day another group of soldiers came back to strip the bus of everything that was moveable but they did not bother us. We were fortunate and nothing bad happened, but these were tense times.

Somewhere along the way the decision was made to quietly send all the dependents home but to avoid making it look like a panic evacuation. We tried to get the people out gradually, and used some euphemistic term like "advanced home leave" or something

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like that. It was in effect an evacuation of all dependents. The airport was 40 miles out of town where it had originally been built during World War II to serve the Firestone rubber plantation. To get to the airport it was necessary to go through a couple of military checkpoints and we knew these could be very hazardous, especially after dark. Since driving unescorted at night was not really an option we had to go out in the day time even though the Pan Am flight did not leave until 1:00 A.M. The logistics of getting to the airport, getting people safely into the terminals were complicated. About five weeks after the coup a large group of dependents, most of the dependents from AID, were scheduled to leave. We had done a lot of preplanning, arranging hotel rooms for our people at the Robertsfield Hotel, just across from the terminal building. We had to go to the embassy and borrow their diplomatic plates because in those days USAID used gratis plates, and these didn't carry much weight. It was much safer to have diplomatic plates, so we used to borrow the plates, put them on the USAID vehicles, and then return them to the embassy after trip. Also to create an illusion of being in touch with our home base we carried a portable two-way radio. This radio was hopelessly out of range once you got a few miles out of town, but we took it anyway so we could fake communications with headquarters. On the particular evening that most of our people were scheduled to depart, I think there were about 25-30 people in the convoy. I went out with one half of the convoy and another AID officer accompanied the other half. Our job was to see the dependents safely on the plane. We passed through the checkpoints with our phony communications with no problems. However, just before leaving I got a call from one of the people in my office, who was married to a Liberian, telling me he had heard through his Liberian contacts that the hotel was unsafe that night. Soldiers were getting drunk at the bar and then going around to the rooms robbing people. We decided not go to the hotel and went directly to the airport departure lounge, which seemed to be fairly secure and safe. The rest of the airport had been shut up, and there were bullet holes all over the place. The idea was to get into the departure lounge as quickly as possible and wait it out there. We were almost through customs; a little money had changed hands and everything seemed to be going smoothly when my five year old son spotted a soldier guarding the entrance to the departure lounge.

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He was a big guy and had a very protruding stomach. This was just too much of an inviting target for my son to resist so he rushed up to him and gave him a gentle playful punch in the tummy. All of our group witnessed this event in horror until the soldier put down his machine gun, picked up my son, who fortunately spoke very good Liberian English, and started to play with him. They started talking and laughing. After that I decided to simply say "we're with him." We all got into the departure lounge safely and with a great sigh of relief.

*Q: So it was obviously a pretty tense situation.*

MARSH: It was very tense. Looking back at it, some of the stories seems a little amusing now, but at the time, it was quite scary. We managed to wait it out in the lounge until the plane came in, On the way back from the airport the other AID officer and myself lucked out by being able to attach ourselves to the U.S. military attach#s convoy. He had come out with his family and a group of embassy dependents, including the ambassador's wife, who also left that evening. The trip back was a snap, we just hooked onto his convoy and were even saluted to as we rolled past the checkpoints.

*Q: So basically, the women and children were evacuated while you guys remained behind. How long did you remain after they had left?*

MARSH: I stayed about three months. My tour was up in a couple of months anyway, so I stayed about a month beyond my regular tour of duty and then returned for a rotation tour in Washington.

*Q: Obviously the coup was a terrible thing, how did you guys manage through the transition from the old Tolbert regime and the new government?*

MARSH: It was pretty dicey at times. When the Mission Director, Ray Garufi, returned to Post he faced a totally new situation. Fortunately, he had always been good at keeping in touch with some of the opposition groups, so after the coup he had some contacts in the

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new government. People from various opposition groups would show up at his house for discussions during the uncertain and chaotic days following the government takeover. In this period just following the coup there was not much official contact between the USAID and the new government. I think the informal meetings the Mission Director had with these various concerned Liberians were useful and kept us a little more informed about what was going on. The AID program was obviously thrown into a real upheaval and we didn't know how or what to continue or even who to work with since our former counterparts had either been killed, arrested or simply dismissed. The Mission was officially closed. It took several weeks before things began to settle down to the point when we able to start making contact with the new government. In order to keep busy and in an attempt to try to constructively think through what we should be doing next we formed an informal "think tank" group within my office to brainstorm any and all ideas that came up. It was an interesting group. It included two of our direct-hire USAID staff members who were married to Liberians, the program economist and an anthropologist assigned to the agriculture division. Both of these guys not only had professional qualifications to bring to the table, they also, because of their close family connections, gave them a lot more insight about what was going on behind the scenes than most of us were privy to. There were about four of us in the core group and we used to meet frequently and sit around the table to talk about anything that came to mind. We jokingly referred to it as the "kitchen cabinet." Other people would join us from time and we developed a lot of ideas. Some of these ideas were pretty far out, and some of them were quite sound. We would float and discuss these ideas to the Mission Director. When we agreed on something that was possible and might have some merit, he would float the idea at one of the daily Country Team meetings. A few were discussed and may have added something to the discussions and efforts to deal with the difficult situation that we suddenly found ourselves confronting. Must admit, a few were quite creative such as the thought that since Liberia was using U.S. dollars as its currency, it might be possible to do some tricky things with the Federal Reserve to offer a carrot to force early elections. It was probably naive to think Doe would even entertain such a notion but at that time we knew very little about him or his intentions so we felt it



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was something worth raising. Am not sure how much our so called kitchen cabinet notions contributed but think we did come up with some interesting ideas and it was also a good way to keep occupied until we could get back to work.

*Q: How would you sum up your overall experience in Liberia?*

MARSH: We enjoyed the first three years, up until the time of the coup, even though it was not an easy place to work. Unlike the other posts I served at I found it hard to develop strong social bonds with my counterparts. One reason we found it difficult to get to know the Liberians on a personal basis may have been their different lifestyles and norms of behavior. Many couples we knew tended to almost lead separate lives and rarely attended nonofficial events together. It was not uncommon for the men to have mistresses and even when this was not the case men would often just “hang out with the guys.” We found, even when invited, very few couples would actually attend our parties. During the four and a half years we were there we ended up with surprisingly few Liberian friends. We did manage to interact with and appreciate the ordinary people that we came into contact with as part of our every day living, marketing, dining out, etc. Liberians have a great sense of humor and kind of a simple charm that was very engaging. A case in point was something the common people picked up on soon after the coup. One, the motto used early in the coup was; “In the name of the people, the struggle continues.” It wasn't long before you heard other versions of this coming out of in the marketplace. Their twist on it was, “In the name of the people, the corruption continues.” This sort of typifies their humor and ability to make light of serious and often desperate situations. We were also very moved when my wife went down to the market place to say goodbye to the various market ladies she had dealt with over the years. Many of them were in tears and some were actually sobbing in what we can assume was a genuine display of affection and sadness to see her leave. Your question was what was our overall impression of Liberia. It was my first assignment in Africa and during the time we were there I grew very fond of Africa and the Africans. I continued to have close association with the region for many more years after living in Monrovia and traveled and worked all over the continent up until 1997 when I



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decided to retire from consulting. The Liberian experience was quite an introduction and, in many ways, it was a tough post. I know people who served there did not like it at all, but we, for the most part, enjoyed our stay and, on balance, I think it was a positive and good experience.

*Q: After you left Liberia, what was your next assignment?*

Joined the Africa Bureau on regional programs - 1980-1983

MARSH: My next assignment was to work in USAID Washington. I was assigned to the Office of Regional Affairs in the Africa Bureau, where I was one of several senior project managers. It turned out to be an interesting arrangement, mainly because of my involvement in a large and successful regional health project. The office of regional affairs was run more like an overseas Mission, in contrast to a typical AID/W backstopping office. Each officer was assigned a number of projects and give actual project management responsibilities. The first task I was given was to help salvage and redesign a regional child survival program that had been languishing on the books for a number of years. The project originated from a request from the director of the WHO for the U.S. to pick up a child health program as part of the Year of the Child. The U.S. agreed and the AID Africa Bureau was given the task to develop a regional child survival program. AID had been working on this in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta for many months.

*Q: This was 1980?*

MARSH: Yes. The project had been languishing for a couple of years. One of the problems was that the relations between AID and the Center for Disease Control had become very strained. In fact, this situation had become so bad that this was, in my view anyway, the main reason the program had not got off the ground. Neither agency trusted the other, each accused the other of having their own agendas and failing to understand or appreciate the real program objectives. The situation had reached a point where it became

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pretty nearly impossible to develop an agreed upon Project Paper that would have any chance of winning approval from the AID bureaucracy. When I took on this task the first thing I had to do was to start to mend fences. It took a lot of time and a lot of patience, but gradually we made progress and finally worked out an arrangement that both sides could live with; it was only then that a workable design began to emerge. Early in this new design effort we established a joint committee, consisting of one CDC operations person, one CDC technical person and an outside medical doctor under contract to AID. I served on the committee as the design officer. Once the general framework of the design had been completed and the basic concept of how this program should operate were put together, we went back and forth between Washington and Atlanta to get concurrence on every aspect of the design. Once everyone was pretty comfortable with the basic plan we started putting more flesh on the bones, calling in many technical experts both from AID and the CDC. I think part of this back and forth process began to build the trust between the two organizations and between the people working in this particular project which was called Combating Childhood Communicable Diseases in Africa, or for short, CCCD, or, as we further shortened it, Triple CD.

*Q: I understand the Triple CD program went on for several years, and it was quite a successful program; could you share with us some of your insights on this?*

MARSH: Yes, absolutely, as a matter of fact, it is one of my favorite subjects. There were several features in the design that I think made the project a little different from the regular AID program. We set forth a concept that departed a little from the established AID Project Paper (PP) rules, namely, that every aspect of the proposed project should be spelled out in detail before projects could be approved. We argued that it only made sense to spell out, in the traditional PP way, the process and the details of the operating procedures and the nature of the "purely regional" part of the project. The other parts of the project, such as which counties, the size and timing of each country component, etc., should be left open. Anyway, we fought through this idea and got agreement that the project would have two components; one was a centralized regional component to include the core training

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programs, the establishment of procurement procedures, the parameters of the CDC technical and management of the staff time to be assigned and paid for by the project. along with a number of other practical operating details. In other words, this segment of the design would have all the required PP details and backup information. The second component of the design that dealt with bilateral implementation and how we would go about doing these sub-projects would not contain this level of detail. We preferred to call these individual country sub-components “country specific projects” so there was no confusion between the regular AID bilateral programs. Anyway, for this segment of the design we were able to just describe how the process worked, how the projects would be initiated, what they would be doing and how they would be managed. Not being tied down to the specifics for this part of the program, gave us a lot of operational flexibility which, in my view, had a lot to do with the ultimate success of the program .It gave us the ability to respond rapidly to country requests and quickly assess and meet their needs. Compared with the more conventional AID procedures this kind of response time was almost unheard of. The key was getting the final PP approval without providing all the painstaking detail at that time. Rather wsimply earmarked blocks of funding for country specific projects with very few preconditions. We did estimate a total level of life of project funding for this segment of the program. Of course this too was flexible and adjustable as the project progressed This had enormous advantage since you did not have to go through the PP process every time you wanted to start up a sub project. As I said, I think this was really one of the keys to the success of the program. We had the procedure streamlined down to where CDC could send out a technical team, gather some data, go through a certain review process, and start a program within two or three months from the time of the initial request. This was considered lightning speed by AID standards.

Another factor which I think was important to the success of the program was the fact that initially we limited the project to three simple interventions, expanded program in immunization, oral rehydration, and the presumptive treatment of malaria. We at firsresisted including malaria treatment because we really wanted to keep the number

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of interventions to a minimum and have the procedures remain simple. However, we were soon persuaded that malaria was such a serious problem and interventions being recommended were so close to the other interventions that it should be included. Many of our colleagues were upset that we resisted including malaria because it included some of the important programs that they were working on. It was hard to resist them but, on the other hand, the design team felt very strongly that we really needed to narrow the focus initially so that we would not end up by having a very diffuse program. I felt compelled not to give into what I described as “the Christmas tree syndrome;” once you got the tree up, everyone wanted to hang their program on it. Much to the chagrin of some of our friends, we stuck to our position which made it even more difficult because we also believed deeply in most of the programs they wanted to add. Later on, after the program was proven and had gathered its own momentum, family planning, nutrition, respiratory diseases, and some other interventions were included in the CCCD program and we were all pleased to see this happen. This gives a little background on the design that is probably not widely known and may give some insights on why the program was so successful. Anyway, so much for the design phase and now on to implementation.

The original program was funded at a “life of project” level of \$16 million. I think we all knew this was too small an amount and the time period was too short, but had to play along with it for a number of fairly good pragmatic reasons. The result was that the project did get approved at a time when social projects were not particularly high on AID's political agenda. It was approved at this funding level as a five year project. Ultimately it became a 13 year program with a funding level of something over \$200 million. I believe it has been one of the most successful AID health programs in Africa.

*Q: After the triple CD program was designed and approved, what were your duties then?*

MARSH: I continued to work for the Regional Office and was given a staff and a portfolio of regional projects to manage. Then AID did something that they rarely do, but should, in my opinion, do more often. They made the person deeply involved in the project design

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the person responsible for managing the project that they had helped create. They essentially said, "You designed it, now you manage it." I was delighted to take the job and I thought that was a great idea because I was obviously very familiar with all the ins and outs of the program and throughout the design phase had always paid a lot of attention to including feature that I felt, from my own experience, would make it easier to manage and implement. I knew the various roads and paths that had been built in, so had a real step-up on the management "learning curve." I was able to pick up and run with it quickly. As far as "lessons learned" I personally think AID should do this more often.

In my new role I had responsibility for the CCCD program plus a number of other regional projects, but also had a competent staff of project managers who were able to take care of the day to day management of most of the other projects so I was able to concentrate most of my effort on the Triple CD program. One of the things that I hadn't mentioned earlier was that when we negotiated the participating agency service agreement with CDC, we were able to hire a full time CDC officer to work on the program in Washington/AID in the Office of Regional Affairs. This person was to help monitor and follow the CCCD program and also be the liaison between CDC and AID. We were very fortunate to recruit Dr. Joe Davis for this position. From the very beginning of our association we were both able to work very harmoniously and, I think, effectively together. We quickly established a high level of mutual trust and respect for each other's different management styles and were able to iron out many interagency problems before they became major issues. After I left the Regional Office, Joe continued working in AID for a number of months and when he eventually returned to CDC he became head of their international office and thus continued to have an active and major management role in the Triple CD project. I think this continuity in management was also part of the reason for the project's success.

In looking back on these years I should add that success did not come easily. There were a lot of tricky and difficult issues to resolve. One involved trying to negotiate our working relationship with the WHO powerful Africa regional office. This became a difficult and sensitive issue and remained so for a long time. During the time I was managing the

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CCCD project I led two delegations to Brazzaville, both unsuccessful, to try to work out a sensible and cooperative understanding over the control and management of the program. These were very tense negotiations. In fact, it took someone of the stature of Haven North representing the very top management in the AID Africa Bureau to finally reach a compromise position and conclude a cooperative agreement between AID and WHO/AFRO. I was on this negotiating team and pleased to see these issues, the resolution of which had eluded us for so long, finally settled. There were other interesting aspects to the Triple CD project that gave it a different dimension from other projects. One was the fact that it was the main regional health project in Africa that was administered through a newly formed consortium of donors known as CADA, that included all of the major European former colonial powers: France, Germany, the UK, Belgium, and Italy, as well as Canada and the U.S. This group would meet periodically to try to coordinate their efforts. In my view, it was a useful exercise, but not terribly relevant to what we ended up doing. I, however, have a theory developed while we were shepherding this project through the AID decision process, that it was very advantageous to be associated with this high visibility international donor group at this particular time when the big focus in AID was "privatization" and large health programs were not particularly popular. The Reagan administration priorities were elsewhere. The fact that we, the U.S., had publicly committed ourselves to CADA as well as to WHO to undertake such a program did help to push it through the system at a time when social programs were not particularly riding high. For what it's worth that was my theory

By 1983 the Triple CD project was booming along. It was attracting quite a bit of additional end of the year health funding because it had demonstrated it could use the money wisely, obligate it quickly and the project was generally popular. Of course, setbacks on a program of this size and complexity are to be expected. Some of these were obviously beyond our control such as the civil war in Liberia or the genocide in Rwanda; others had to do with the changes of the recipient countries' internal political leadership, but, by and large, it was judged as being a success. I was very proud to be associated with

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it and, having decided to retire from AID at the end of this assignment, I was very pleased to end my career on a high note.

Retired from USAID in 1983

*Q: So you retired from AID in 1983?*

MARSH: Yes, I decided, or we decided, that we probably wanted to have our kids get their education in one spot rather than moving around the world, so I retired and we moved back to California. However, for the next 10 years or so I was actively consulting. In many ways I consider this last ten plus year period as an extension of my AID career and my foreign service career, although technically, my foreign service career ended in 1983. After retirement most of my early jobs were related to the Triple CD project. All were concerned with the management of health, population, and child survival programs. For the most part, my assignments were in sub-Saharan Africa but starting in 1990 I began working with the Egyptian National Population Council and continued this association for about four years. For me this turned out to be an ideal assignment. It had all the benefits of being able to work out of my home and yet all the advantage of being able to follow through on project plans and strategies developed jointly with Egyptian counterparts during my frequent visits to Cairo and the various Governorates involved in the program. It was almost like being assigned to post. I kept in close contact with my principal counterpart, the director of the NPC Secretariat, by phone and fax. I also kept in close contact with a NPC working staff, who I was able to provide work assignments to, and at the same time I would receive my own Scope of Work for the interim period between visits. I also, of course, would be in constant touch with the Cairo Mission through the Cairo field office of the parent company I worked for, E. Petrich and Associates. Each time I would travel to Egypt I would stay 4 to 6 weeks and would have, an in-country Scope of Work as well as one that would allow me to work for sustained periods of time when I was back in California. Over a three year period I made 14 trips back and forth and was probably working between half to three-quarters time over the course of the time I was involved with



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the project. In the end we introduced management improvements in all the NPC offices in the Governorates and some of the headquarters departments. Through the efforts of my many counterparts, who made up the drafting committees, at least ten Arabic language operating procedures manuals were produced and distributed covering all the main areas of management, including Finance, Communications, Supervision, Evaluation and Planning. There was also a manual on "Manual Updating and Maintenance Procedures." It was a successful project and I think it illustrated how it is possible, in this electronic age, to have an effective technical assistance project by having the advisor commuting back and forth rather than actually having to reside in-country during the life of the project. It was an interesting project and it was similar to having an overseas assignment. As a result of this assignment I developed long and lasting friendships by working for such sustained periods of time on matters we all considered important. These are trulsome of the most cherished rewards one associated with foreign service life.

### Concluding observations

*Q: How would you sum up your career with the Foreign Service?*

MARSH: I considered it a privilege to have been a member of the Foreign Service. I think working in international development has enormous rewards as well as heart-tugging frustrations. One has only to think of what happened in Liberia to realize how frail our achievements are and how quickly they can be obliterated. I was sickened by what happened in Liberia. After spending four and a half years struggling to bring about a better life and future for the Liberian people, it was obviously painful to see it all go down the drain and heartbreaking to learn of the horror and human suffering that resulted from the civil war. From a career perspective one has to realize that other than for a few people we trained who may have survived, everything else was lost. But, I guess that is part of the territory, and one tries to offset these tragic events against the many positive things that happened, at least in part, as a result of our presence and the joint efforts we made iother places we served, or conditions we influenced to enable Governments to introduce policies



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to improve the lives of their people. Hopefully some good and lasting effects of our work will endure in many places and at the very least will have provided the stepping stones for future development.

When I first joined AID, I was very idealistic. I was an ardent believer in the need for development of the lesser developed countries of the world. Forty years later I still think this is so. The world, in this coming millennium, is a very different one from the one we faced in the sixties but the root problems of instability, famine, disease, lack of education and overpopulation persist. I think maybe today, my idealism is tempered with a little bit more pragmatism, but I still believe very deeply in development. I'm glad I had my working career trying to do something to further this cause and somehow managed to remain optimistic enough to think it is still possible to make the world a better place.

*Q: If you were talking to some young people who were asking you whether they should join up with the foreign service today, what would be your advice to them?*

MARSH: On several occasions young aspiring foreign service officers have asked for advice and guidance, and my answer was always, "go for it!" The work is usually interesting and often fascinating and if you like adventure mixed with a lot of hard work and uncertainty it's one of the best careers I can imagine. I would tell them; "It's a great life. The work is interesting, you get to wander around the world, change jobs every couple of years, and yet your r#sum# shows employment stability. In a sense it is a career that legitimizes drifting." I say this only partly in jest, for I can think of no other job that gives you such a sense of accomplishment and worth, and at the same time feeds a wanderlust and thirst for adventure that is almost a prerequisite for anybody that wants to go into the foreign service. During this interview I couldn't help wondering how future generations of Foreign Service Officers might go about the task of producing an oral history of their experiences in the twenty first century. I would like to think that it might be quite similar. The problems are different but the hopes and aspirations, the motivations and, I suspect, the enthusiasm will probably remain constant over time. When I joined in 1959, the world

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problems appeared enormous, the Marshal Plan had pretty much run its course and was judged to have been successful, the cold war presented so many challenges for us and our relationships with the developing world. I think that AID's accomplishments over the four decades have been mixed, but on balance I am satisfied that our efforts did have a positive effect on the developing world. I think that these gains may easily slip away if we don't find ways to manage globalization to maximize the benefits it has to offer and also allow us to intervene, when necessary, to elevate hardships and inequities that will inevitably result if the systems were to go unchecked. I suspect managing globalization and finding acceptable ways to forgive debt and use these freed-up resources for bonafide development purposes will be the main challenge for the next generation of people selected to carry on this kind of work.

*Q: Do you have any thoughts about the future of foreign assistance?*

MARSH: Yes, in fact I think about this quite a lot, and I do have some thoughts on the subject. During my years in AID, the agency underwent a lot of change. It has gone from a young, kind of "feeling its way" type bureaucracy, to what many perceive to be "an old-line, entrenched and battle-weary" bureaucracy. In addition through years of Congressional oversight and a myriad of amendments to the act, the Agency has become so encumbered and gathered so much baggage it is often hard for it to function effectively and humanly even when its motivations and objectives are well intended. The lead time between project identification and implementation is now far too long and my feeling is that it seems to get longer each year to the point that it has become a serious impediment to the Agency's effectiveness. I don't believe it serves any useful purpose to long for a return to the "good old days" which were probably not nearly as good as we like to think they were. What worked in the 50s and 60s would probably not work well in today's world and may not even be appropriate. But what we have now does not work very well either. There is no question in my mind that the U.S. needs to rethink and revamp the way it delivers assistance to the developing world. The advances in technology and the unstoppable force of globalization gives an urgency to the problem. The industrial nations of the world need to find ways to

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help the developing nations maintain their gains of recent years and have an obligation to make sure poorer countries are not be left behind or even out of technological advances and changes being driven at such an accelerated pace by the globalization process. I firmly believe that the industrial powers in general and, the U.S. in particular, must work out a system to avoid gross inequities in the distribution of the world's wealth and narrow the gaps between "the haves" and "the have nots." I also feel that ideally we, the U.S., would be more able to meet this challenge if it designed a new foreign assistance delivery system specifically tailored to address the advantages and the problems brought about by this globalized world. Seemingly the ideal solution would be to abolish AID as an agency and start over again but as a practical matter I personally do not think this should happen until there is a more hospitable environment for development and a more general realization in this country of the importance of foreign assistance. My fear is that if we were to try to introduce a totally new approach to foreign assistance at this point we may end with a system that may even be less equipped to deal with the development needs of the twenty-first century.

So, I have come around to the opinion that we probably should try to fix what we have rather than replace it with something new. I also strongly feel that it is important to continue to allow the foreign assistance agency to have a measure of operational autonomy since the agendas and priorities of the State Department and AID are so different. One final thought, or perhaps it's more of a hope, and that is I would like to see some of the idealism, excitement, dedication that ran throughout the agency during the Kennedy era find its way back into the system. In closing, I would like to say that with a full recognition of all of its many shortcomings, I still consider it was a privilege to have served or been associated with AID for so many years. I hope it can somehow be made into a more effective organization in the future, one that is more capable of responding, promptly and efficiently to the complex development needs of the twenty-first century.

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*Q: This is a good point to conclude this interview. I want to thank you very much for your time.*

MARSH: Thank you.

End of interview